Writers in Progress

2003 – 2004

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Dedication

To all the students who think they can't,
and all the students who know they can.

Because of the large number of submissions we receive each year, we are faced with the difficult talk of choosing which papers to publish. Space limitations prevent us from printing every paper we receive. We apologize because we believe that every writer who has had the courage and pride to offer his or her work for publication deserves recognition. This issue is dedicated to you.

We honor submissions from:

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**Denotes assignments from pilot curriculum.*

Introduction

by Lynne Nadeau

Every year, the Basic Writing instructors and tutors honor student papers by publishing them in *Writers in Progress*. The students represented here all start the semester unsure of whether their writing projects will succeed. By the end of 16 weeks in the Basic Writing program, these same students have confidence in their increasingly competent and compelling essays.

Writers in Progress has another important purpose in the developmental writing classroom. The successful papers here serve as examples for you and your classmates, who are this year's writing students. As you progress through the semester, the 2003-2004 essays can help you understand the assignments you work on. When you read them, you see other students practicing the skills you are learning: creating thesis statements, using anecdotes, and writing dialogue. Their success might inspire an essay of yours for next year's students to use as an example.

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My Home Away From Home
by Emilio Padilla

A place that I would be able to describe well off the top of my head would be the 18 yard line of the Methuen High Stadium soccer field. It's a place that I was in every fall and spring for 13 years of my life. This place has been a part of my life since I was 4 years old, and it's a sport that I love to play. The importance of this place is a lot to me because whenever I want to just get away from everyone, get exercise, practice, and or just look around the field this is where I would go to for it all.

One Thursday night in November, I went to the Methuen High Stadium half an hour before the game. I warmed up and prepared myself mentally because physically I was already prepared. I would prepare myself by listening to music by Linkin Park that would motivate and get my adrenalin pumping, and thinking about the game. I would take laps around the soccer field with my teammates and stretch out on the grass that was greener than a leaf and thick like a rug. It was perfect to play on. It wasn't too low or too high. It wasn't too thick, or too thin, but was just right because they kept this field in top condition all season long.

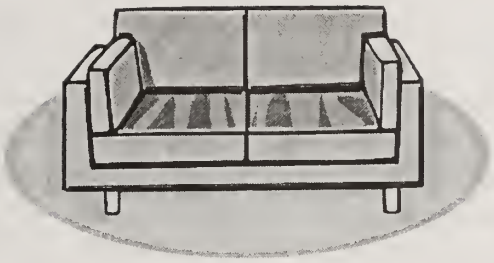
Two minutes before game time we would get our speech from our coach. He would yell. His face would be red like a sunburn and his veins on his forehead and his neck would bulge as if someone were choking him. It wasn't the type of yelling that you would get when you lose. It was the kind that would motivate you to play your best. Then as a team we would walk onto the field and take our positions. My position was right defense on the 18 yard line. From this position you can see everything perfectly, the lines, net, goal posts, stadium, and the big stadium lights. I would take the time out to look around and notice the people in the stands screaming and yelling player's names. Their faces would glow like a glow stick because of how proud they were of their sons and how far they have gotten to play in a varsity team. Sounds of the parents would pump us up to give us a good game that they would remember. I would also see in the background signs that friends held up saying "GO RANGERS" or signs saying all our names. I also saw on the sidelines standing out in blue, our team colors were shiny in certain angle you looked at from. From this position you could see the fence outlining the stadium, and the football post standing out like the cream filling in an Oreo cookie.

I looked at the center of the field and saw the ball in the middle and the referee getting ready to blow the whistle. The game moved quickly. Around the end of half time there was 5 seconds left. As we walked off the field you could smell our stench; it was like our locker room where we had our equipment. Some of us you could tell that we were breathing heavy from sprinting to the ball. On the sidelines you could hear the coaches yelling at us for the little mistakes that we made.

That night I would have to say was the best game I have ever played. I was on top of every ball coming my way and every player that came my way I stopped him no matter what. The sounds of the balls being kicked was like a boxer punching a punching bag. The whistles being blown sounded like the whistle you would hear in factories when it was lunch time or time to go home, and the coaches yelling, "Lets get a head on that ball" or "Lets go brotha" will always stay in my head forever. It was like his voice was on the intercom at the game. You were able to hear it from anywhere on the field.

Now that my high school career is over I hope that I will further myself by playing in college, semi-pro, and/or professionally. Even if I don't make it far with soccer I will always go back to the field that I started playing on. Whether it be kicking the ball around just for fun, I will never forget this place because this place was where I would go to when I wanted to get away, practice, and just look around the field and remember playing when I was younger.

Emilio was a student in Harlan Kroff's Basic Writing course in the fall of 2003. Before taking the course, Emilio "didn't like to write at all." Now that he has completed the course, he says, "I have no problems writing papers. I have more of an interest in writing my papers."



A Simple Place
by BonnieLee Yanez

A simple place to me is my home, but mainly my living room. My living room is my favorite room of all because it is my alone time place with my husband. It is the only room that has an adult theme to it. The living room is my time to zone out from my daily activities.

The floor has a fuzzy soft dark gray rug covering the whole living room but it is very hard to keep clean. Sometimes I wonder why we put the rug to begin with. It requires mandatory cleaning everyday because it attracts everything, even dust which comes from all four windows of the room. Looking out the windows I can see a nice view of family houses with large back yards that children can run and play. The noisy thing about this area is the cars. Each car around here has an annoying alarm system and any little noise or a brush of something can set it off. That is the only downfall.

On my walls I have two horizontal Chinese paintings. It is designed with a Chinese farmhouse and two women using their surrounding environment to survive. For example a woman is near a stream cleaning clothes by hand. The other woman is planting crops. I like these paintings because you can place the paintings together or separate them as I did to make it look like two different stories. Across from that wall I have a family collage in a large twenty-four by twenty-four inch black frame my husband made. He combined all our family members into one. The best part about it is that our picture of us is right in the middle saying we are the glue for both families. It makes me happy and grateful that we have so many people to count on.

The first thing you see starting from the entrance is a rich black leather loveseat sofa. It is comfortable because of the large cushions allowing me to just sink in and relax. I always choose to kick my feet up on the loveseat and squeeze my husband alongside me. Next to the loveseat is the big brother sofa. The large sofa stands out more because of its beautiful long dark black drapes with an extra long gold valence that hangs over it. This masterpiece was created by my mother-in-law. This is the one of the things that has a woman's touch to it. It is one of the reasons why I enjoy being in this room.

Alongside the sofa is the ultimate mother of all TVs, my very own fifty-four inch silver screen with a view that can make your eyes hurt and a silver five disc DVD surround sound entertainment system that can blow you away. Movie times are the best time for me. I can enjoy the great sound and perfect view. This is my own home theater. I can eat popcorn, dunk my corn chips into the cheese dip and still be blown away. My best movie to watch is *Queen of the Damned* because it plays the loudest rock music ever. Beside the TV is our cool collection of CDs. My all time favorite song artist is Ashanti.

Her first album is the bomb! We are also DVD collectors. We tend to buy every movie that comes out, and of course the multiplayer, internet hook up called the X-Box system to play games. My husband mostly plays this system only I think it's a "guy thing."

To the right of that is my new black large U shaped computer- workstation. It originally is made to fit in the corner but not in my house. Everything is so big that nothing else fits. I don't have a computer yet but it has come in handy to help me study and do homework. It has a lot of shelves but since it is new I have only placed a few of my books, pens and extra paper on one side. The other side is totally empty as well as the bottom shelves. But I do have a stapler, tape dispenser and a mounded sharpener just for me. The best part is the chair. It is large black and silver leather with armrest that reclines back for perfect comfort. The unique thing about it was that this was my project to do. The original color of the desk was brown. I took time out from my busy day and painted what I think is a masterpiece even if it was just one color. This is the only thing in the room I could say, "Hey I did it."

In conclusion, my living room is the best room to relax because I have such hectic days. I really look forward to resting on my big couch and sharing many memories alone with my husband. My living room is my escape from reality and that it is close by.

In the fall of 2003, BonnieLee, a wife and mother of two children, was a student Jackie Pena's Basic Writing course. Bonnie has always like writing. After taking the course, she feels she can write even better. BonnieLee plans to enter the Early Childhood program here at NECC.

My Mother's Gift
by Tracey Connor

My mother's faith in the Catholic religion has always been a part of my life. Growing up I never understood the importance of it. As a child I would see my mother praying with her rosary beads and she would always tell me that through prayer comes strength. Until now I didn't realize how important the prayers of the rosary would mean to me or how it would play a role in my future.

Following the tragedy of September 11, 2001, I was deployed overseas. On the morning that I left, my mother was sitting in the living room with her rosary beads in hand, holding back the tears. As I leaned over to give her a hug she embraced me with both arms and squeezed me tight. I didn't want to ever let go but I knew I had to be strong for the both of us. As I pulled away my mother handed me a little black, velvet box. As the tears continued to trickle down my face I opened the box and saw a beautiful gold shimmering ring. It was a rosary ring. My mother said it was special and that it would bring me strength, hope, and most of all home. In so many ways it did.

My rosary ring is gold in color and solid in form. It has ten circular knobs molded onto the surface divided by a cross molded in between. If you close your eyes, as many times that I did in prayer, you can feel the bumps lined evenly spaced all the way around. The inner ring is smooth to touch with a slight unreadable inscription. Due to the elements of my environment it has since lost its blinding shine. At first sight of it I felt a warm secure feeling overwhelm my heart. I knew from that point on that no matter where I was going, my mother's gift, my rosary ring, would keep me safe.

There were many times during my deployment that I felt alone and unaware of what the next day would bring. During these times I would pray my rosary. My prayers brought me home. I would remember my mother and her strength and faith in me to go on. I would remember my family and the many reasons why I chose to join and stick with the military. My prayers and memories of home got me through a lot of tough days.

One of my missions during my deployment showed me the importance of my faith in my ring and my religion. I was assigned to a raven mission. A raven mission consisted of me along with a partner acting as armed escorts aboard a C- 130 military aircraft. Our jobs were to protect and secure the aircraft and its passengers to an unsecure area of Afghanistan.

When I was first asked to carry out this mission, among other things I was extremely nervous. The night before the mission I called my mother just to say hello, and let her know I loved her very much. I couldn't tell her about the mission because I wouldn't know where we were going until the morning and I didn't want her to worry. So I just asked her to pray for me as I would be doing with my ring.

That night I didn't sleep. I packed my rucksack with the essentials, two M.R.E.s, an extra uniform, and most important my ring. The morning came quick. By 0430hours I was ready to go. I walked about a quarter mile from my tent to the hanger where my briefing would take place. The briefing consisted of who we were escorting, where, the time limits given and the threat level of the area we were flying into. We went over emergency procedures and the rules of engagement. Once the briefing was complete we packed our things and got onto a bus that would take us to the aircraft standing by on the flight line. As we got on I sat at one end of the aircraft while my partner sat at the other.

The C- 130 military aircraft we were on wasn't like a commercial airplane you and I as civilians are accustomed to. As I looked around I felt a cold uncomfortable chill run through my body. The inner cavity of the aircraft looked like it had been ripped out. I could see all the wires and pipes lined along the inner shell. Cargo seats were strapped up along both sides of the walls. Right down the middle were two Humvees and one cargo pallet strapped with chains to the floor of the aircraft.

As the pilot started the engines, at this very moment I realized how serious and complicated this mission would be. As the aircraft's loud engines roared and my nerves went into hysterics I began praying my rosary. Using my left thumb I twisted my ring in deep thought praying for strength to make it through. I couldn't and still can't remember a time that I had been so nervous. Maybe it was the seriousness of the mission or the intense atmosphere of the aircraft. By saying my prayers, I had taken my mind off of all of that and I made it through. The mission was a success.

Since the day I received my ring I have never taken it off. It has left a semi--permanent discoloration on my ring finger and a permanent memory on my heart. I plan on keeping it forever in remembrance of so many experiences I have to treasure. When I look at my ring I remember where it all started and what brought me to this day. I realize that without it I would not have gotten through the many long, lonely and difficult days overseas, and I have my mother to thank for it.

Tracey, who plans to study in the Nursing program at NECC, took Brian Kuhl's Basic Writing course in the spring of 2004. Before she took his course, she "hated writing and avoided it at all costs." Now that she has completed the course, she loves writing and says, "I love to create using memories and feelings."

A Medal Award
by Sahily Fuentes

In the summer of 1995 a hot and beautiful day arrived. It was June 25th, the day of my high school graduation. It was an exciting moment for me as it was the last day of my high school years. I was pleased to receive the Best Student of the Year Award at the end of the ceremony. It was a bronze medallion.

This medallion was made out of a special metal with a reddish-brown color, made by melting copper and tin together. It's dark on the front and a lighter on the back. It's hard, carved with a smooth outer edge and indent engraving on the front with a simple design. It has a round shape on the bottom with two branches that tie together in the middle, covering almost both sides of the medal. In the center it has a circle and within the circle. It has a symbol of a waterfall that represents my high school, which mimics the shape of the medallion with two branches that also tie together in the center with a book open on top. On the left side of the waterfall the word "EDUCATION" is engraved. On the right side the word "DISCIPLINE" is engraved. Appearing at the top the year 1992 is engraved, which is the year I started High School. On the bottom is the city and country of my high school, which is Santiago, Dominican Republic. On the back my name and the phrase: THE BEST STUDENT OF 1992-1995 is engraved. It has two metal rings attached to a long ribbon with the colors representing the flag of my country red, blue and white.

During the ceremony I was really nervous and anxious because days before the graduation one of my teachers told the class that there would be three recognized as the best students on the night of the graduation. She mentioned the names of the students that would receive an award, but didn't specify who would win third, second or first place. I was very happy to be one of those students.

After I received my diploma I waited for the moment when my teacher would announce the names of those receiving awards. The moment came, and my teacher, Genara, stood on the platform and with the awards in her hands she started by calling third place, Arnaldo Pena. When she said his name I was more anxious and nervous because I was close to first place. Then she called Ana Cabrera for second place. After she finished the second award I started to cry. I was so happy I didn't know what to say.

My teacher said, "And now first place graduate with honors, best student of the year from 1992-1995, Sahily Rodriguez." At that moment everybody started clapping. I proudly stood up to receive my award that I earned and deserved. My teacher asked me if I wanted to say something. I was so happy, excited and nervous at the same time. The only thing I could say was, "Thank you to my family and my teachers because without them I wouldn't be here today." It was a special time because my family and closest friends were there to enjoy that moment with me.

I received this medallion for my great skills and dedication during my high school years. I was honored to be recognized. I keep it in my bedroom, near my graduation picture. It reminds me of my high school days that I enjoyed and miss so much. This medallion brings a lot of good memories because it has part of my life with it.

I will always keep it in a safe place, not only in my home, but in my heart because it has helped me in my life to remain strong and to never give up, always putting discipline and dedication first in everything I accomplish in my life.

In the spring of 2004, Sahily, who plans to major in computer technology at NECC, took Brian Kuhl's Basic Writing course. Sahily says that before she took the course, "I was afraid because I felt like I was a weak writer with many errors." Now that she's completed the course, she feels more confident and comfortable with writing.

Aunt Sal
by Mary Mullen

My favorite aunt is named Sarah Pagliuca, but to me she is Aunt Sal. I love her very much because she has always been parental towards me and genuinely concerned about me. She was and still is a very important part of my life because I lived in the same house as her during my childhood and she has bestowed her values on me.

Aunt Sal will be 84 years old this May. She is not much more than five feet tall now and has thinning grey hair. She wears glasses and speaks with a squeaky voice. More often than not she is wearing elastic waist jeans with a cotton shirt and rubber healed black shoes. She has a very distinctive cackle like laugh that is contagious. Her feet and hands seem almost childlike in size now that she is aging. Even though she is small in size, she is one of the strongest women I know.

Aunt Sal lived up stairs from me in a three-decker house. This was the house that she was born in. I spent a lot of time up in her apartment watching her cook, sew or feeding me. She would always have something good cooking. I could always smell whatever she was cooking once I reached the stairs after I went through the basement! I remember as a child thinking, "Why can't my mother cook as well as her?" She made the best Sunday dinner. She always had fresh vegetables and a homemade dessert. My favorite dessert she taught me to make is called Buckeyes. This is a peanut butter and chocolate ball type dessert. If I needed my pants hemmed or a button sewn my mom would send me upstairs to have Aunt Sal do it. I remember when I was in second grade and she had sewn me a sleeveless summer dress. It was white with blue stars. I cried all the way to school because I thought it was so ugly. So I guess I didn't love everything she had made me!

Just recently she made me a beautiful needlepoint. It is a fruit scene that I have hung in my kitchen. She called me to tell me that she was making this for me, but she wasn't going to frame it because the last one she made me was so expensive to frame. When I met her at my mom's house to get the needlepoint, it was framed. This is the perfect example of her generosity and thoughtfulness.

I can think of many things she has done to help out my family and me. One instance that stands out is the night she sat in the emergency room all night with my mom and me when I was sick. I remember my mom calling Aunt Sal and asking her for a ride to the hospital. In an instant she was in her car waiting to drive us there. She comforted me as I was vomiting, and tried to ease my mind by telling me I would be okay. We didn't have a car when I was growing up so Aunt Sal would either let my dad use her car or drive us to where we needed to be.

Aunt Sal had a motherly quality about her. She often treated me as if I were her own daughter. A great childhood memory I have is going to her house down on the Cape. She would drive my mom and me down for a few days. I always knew I would be fed yummy foods like rice pudding or apple crisp. Something we would do together was take a walk down the dirt road to the lake where I would go swimming, or take a drive to Onset Beach to swim in the ocean. She would make sure I was covered up and wasn't getting burnt- just like a mom would do.

We often went to church together down there and at home in our regular parish as well. She would always try to be one of the first people to get to her car so we wouldn't

get stuck in traffic getting out of there. She has always been impatient when it comes to having to wait for something, and has the reputation in the family of always being the first one to leave a party or function. "I've got to love and leave you folks now," she would always say while she was gathering her belongings and kissing people goodbye.

Aunt Sal has overcome many hardships in her life. The stories of her childhood sound like something that came out of the book *Angela's Ashes*. She lost her twin sister at age five to pneumonia. She was constantly moving because her parents couldn't pay the rent. When she was married she had multiple miscarriages and then lost a few babies as infants. When she talks about these horrible events, she always stresses that her faith got her through it all. She is a strong, spiritual and loyal woman. She did have two beautiful kids in the end.

Our relationship has changed now that I'm an adult. We talk now as if we were girlfriends. We gossip about our personal family issues. She asks about the girls schooling and health and if Pete and I manage to get any time alone together. She tells me about her granddaughter's upcoming marriage. "She's not getting married in a Catholic church you know," she reveals to me.

"It's okay." I said, "God will still bless their marriage!"

I feel lucky that I have Aunt Sal in my life. She has inspired me to be a better aunt and mother. I have learned from her that faith will get you through anything. I have also learned that being an aunt is a very important role. You can be an extension of a mother, and also be a friend which most mothers and daughters aren't. The most important thing I have learned from my aunt is that family is the most important thing in my life and I'm very glad that she is part of mine. I'm a firm believer that you get back what you give out, and Aunt Sal is proof of that. She is very much loved and that's because she has given much love.

Before taking Mike Wilcomb's Basic Writing course in the spring of 2004, Mary was "horrified at the thought of writing a paper." Now that she has completed the course, Mary says, "I am definitely more comfortable and confident with my writing." Outside of school, Mary is busy as a wife and mother of six-year-old twin girls, Grace and Julia.

One Special Lady
by June Witham

My mom is a special friend to me. Though we will always be mother and daughter as I've grown over the past thirty eight years I have come to realize just how important our friendship is. She has always been there for me. She has always been kind, caring and giving to me. This is why she is not only my mother but also a very special friend.

The first thing you will notice about my mother is her beautiful smile. Her smile is big and bright. It shines like the stars at night. My mother's eyes are brown. When you look at her eyes they are small and serious. She wears gold squared rimmed glasses. Her face is round, with a strong stern appearance, but once you get to know her you soon realize how sweet she is. Her makeup consists of shiny pink lipstick and rose colored blush. Soft is what you feel when you touch her skin. Her hair is red and curly. She always wears her hair neatly blown back. What my mother will wear on a typical day is a blouse and a pair of dress slacks. Mom will not leave the house till she looks just right.

My mom works as a Quality Technician at a company called Davol Inc located in Woburn, MA. She has worked at this company for fifteen years. She first started as a production worker at a medical company called Portex in Wilmington, MA after being a homemaker for eighteen years. She worked her way up the ladder to become a Quality Inspector then a Quality Technician, her current position. Her work hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. My mother inspects everything that comes into and out of the building. Some days are so busy. She will be needed to inspect a part coming in and at the same time she is needed to clear a line so products can go out. That is when she feels like a rag doll being pulled in different directions. On most days my mom enjoys her work. My mother is looking forward to retiring soon, but she will miss the people that she works with.

My mom is so thoughtful; I remember the time we were at our camp ground in Westford, MA. We waited till the last day of camp to pack up. On this day it was raining. Everything was wet and muddy. The whole day seemed out of control. We had to pack the entire camper in less than three hours. The kids were running around and stomping in puddles. I knew I needed to feed them lunch and try to keep them dry and clean. I continued to pack because time was running out. I was starting to feel the stress and I didn't know what to do first. When I heard a car pull in, I turned and looked. It was my mother. I smiled and said, "Thank God."

My mother said, "I thought you could use some help today."

I said, "Yes we could. How did you know?"

My mother said, "I thought I would bring the kids home feed them lunch and give them a bath."

I said, "Mother you are the best."

My mom is so creative; I remember the time when I was going through my divorce. This was one of the roughest times of my life. I had been married for almost two years to an alcoholic. My son, Benjamin, was about to turn two years old. I didn't know how to explain what was happening to my son. Confusion and pain is what I saw when I looked into my son's eyes. He began to ask questions like, "Why did daddy leave?" That is when my mother created a book. She wrote the story of our family Mommy, Daddy and Benjamin, including pictures she drew herself. She would read the story to Benjamin

telling him this is the story of his special family. I am still not sure if he understood but I know he felt such comfort sitting on his grandmother's lap listening to his special story.

My mom is so generous. I remember the time I was getting married for the second time. My fiancé and I have been together for five years. We were both married before so we weren't ready to rush into marriage again. Then in December 2002 out of nowhere Jim, my fiancé, had a pancreatic attack. After several hospital stays and many tests later in January 2003 he was diagnosed with bile duct cancer. We decided we should get married. His original operation date had been moved up. This made it almost impossible to plan a wedding. We got the marriage license on Friday. The Justice of Peace was scheduled for Sunday, which was Easter. On Saturday I bought my dress. We also purchased the rings that day. My mother ordered food for the reception. She took care of everything. She made sure I had a bouquet. My mother bought champagne for our toast. She picked out a beautiful wedding cake. My mother planned a special song for our first dance. At the end of the reception, which was at my sister's house, we started to open the gifts. My mother had bought us a one night stay at the bridal suite at the Marriott Hotel in Andover, MA. I said, "Mom this is too much. You have done enough for us."

My mother said, "I want you to enjoy your wedding night."

I said, "We will at home."

My mother said, "You will enjoy your wedding night at the Marriot and don't worry about the children. I will take care of them tonight."

I said, "Mom I can't ask you to do that. You have done too much already."

My mother said, "Yes you can. That is why I am your mother."

I said, "Mom thank you. You are so generous."

My mother taught me how to cook; I remember when I was a little girl, she would let my sister Nancy and I help make doughnuts. We would help her mix all the ingredients in a big mixing bowl. She would let us take turns stirring the batter. Then we would put flour on the cutting board and roll out the dough. My sister would take the first turn cutting the doughnuts out with the doughnut cutter. My mother would drop the doughnuts into the hot oil. She would tells us that the oil was too hot and it was a grown up's job to put the doughnuts in the oil. We would have to wait for the doughnuts to cool. When the doughnuts were done cooling, it was time to sprinkle them with cinnamon and sugar. The best part of cooking with my mother was getting to sample what we made. So when the doughnuts were all done, she would let us pick one. We would have it with a glass of milk.

My mother also enjoys knitting; I remember the time she knit a white shawl complete with a hat and booties for my daughter's christening. My daughter, Brianna, looked so beautiful in the outfit made by her grandmother. Brianna now has a special christening outfit that she can pass down to her daughter. The enjoyment on my mother's face seeing Brianna dressed in the outfit she knit for her brought tears to my eyes.

Writing is special to my mom. I remember after my divorce, which was about eight years ago, I decided to sign up for nursing school. Prior to my divorce I was a fulltime mother. The thought of leaving Benjamin every night so I could be in school made me feel nervous and upset. My mother decided to write a special poem for me. The poem went on to say how she would take extra special care of Benjamin. There would be special dinners for two. Bath time would be filled with a lot of fun. Books would be read by Grammy every night. Rocking him to sleep with a special kiss delivered by Grammy

from his mother would be done nightly. All the words in poem rhymed. It was written is such a special way that it touched my heart and made me realize my son would be well taken care of while I was in school.

My mother will be retiring next year. I think this will be a difficult time for her. This will be a time to relax. It will be okay to take a nap. My mother will have to learn that the coming years are her time. She will have to begin to put herself first, and take time to do things she enjoys. This will be hard for her because she has never done this. I hope that she signs up for a writing class. She loves to write. Maybe she will plant tulips. She has always talked about doing this. Whatever she does I just want her to relax and enjoy her retirement.

My mother is very important to me because I know I can always count on her. Over the years we have grown close. She has been there for all the ups and downs in my life. Whether we are crying or laughing together just knowing she is there helps. This is why she is not only my mother but my special friend, a friendship I will treasure forever. I can only pray that I will have the same friendship with my little girl when she grows up.

June took Clare Thompson's Basic Writing course in the spring of 2004. Before she took the class, she says, "I felt like I couldn't do it." Now that she has completed her course, she says, "I enjoy writing. It is fun for me now." Outside of school, June is busy as a wife and mother of six children.

He's the One I Admire
by Jackie Carty

Looking through the windows in the serenity of my living room watching the sunset, I let my mind wander. A silhouette of a male person comes to mind, producing a sense of comfort. The person in that silhouette is someone I admire very much, for that person is my brother Ruben. A man with a noble soul, he is the brother that any person would be proud to have.

My brother is a very good looking guy. He is tall and is an average weight. His big light brown eyes make a gorgeous match with the two dimples on his cheeks that serve as decoration to his delightful smile on his lips. His body has the structure of a sculptor. He looks just like a movie star. Ruben is a young man with the experience of an old man.

Ruben is married to a beautiful, intelligent young woman. They have three adorable children: a little girl five years old and the other two are twins who are going to be one year old at the end of the month. Ruben is a great father. He dearly loves his children and is always involved in activities with them. I remember one day when his wife called him desperately at his job because their daughter Jaylynn was supposed to meet with her aunt at the Madison Square Garden. The little girl's mother could not take her because she was at the hospital with one of the baby twins that had fever. Jaylynn was going to see a play and she had been so excited about it for weeks. That is when Ruben said,"I will take her there or my name is not Ruben." Then he said to her, "Baby give me a few minutes and I will call you back." He made arrangements with one his co-workers and then he was able to take his daughter to the Madison Square Garden. Ruben wants to make sure that his kids are well taken care of and all their needs are provided for them.

His sense of responsibility is outstanding. One day I called him to invite him to the Yankees World Series. I know he loves them and this is what he said, "Hello!"

"Hi Ruben, it's me Jackie."

"Hey what's up?

"I'm calling you to invite you to the World Series tonight."

"Sounds great, but I can't go."

"Why not? All of us are going just us brothers and sisters' night out. We are paying for your ticket because we know you are broke."

"That's nice of you guys. I appreciate it but I really can't go. I'm scheduled to work tonight."

"Come on Ruben don't be like that. Call in sick and let's go have fun."

"I'm sorry but you know me. If I do that I won't be able to enjoy the game. For that I might as well not go. Maybe next time, but thank you anyway." When Ruben has to do something or be at a place he makes sure he does it. For him to be early to an appointment or to maintain a commitment it must be taken as professional ethics.

I remember once when I was taking him to an appointment he had at the dentist in Queens Boulevard, N.Y. It happened that we were coming from downtown Manhattan and we were at the entrance of the 59M Bridge and there was heavy traffic that was taking forever to move on. There was an accident a few blocks ahead and the police and ambulance were at the scene of the accident already. Anybody that has any familiarity with what it's like being stuck in traffic in the city of N.Y. knows that it would take

forever to clear. Thus he decided to cross the bridge walking since the dentist office was on the other side of the bridge. I said,"Ruben wait. It should clear soon."

"Jackie you know better. If I stay here and wait for the traffic to start moving I'll never make it on time." He was determined to get there on time.

"Okay, but be careful with the cars. You know people in N.Y. drive like crazy."

"Don't you worry I'll be okay. I'll wait for you at the dentist when I finish, drive safely." I think he inherited his sense of responsibility from my father. He was so responsible.

Ruben is kind and sweet. When there is a person that needs his help no need to ask twice because as soon as he can he'll be there. A while ago one of my friends was moving. She had contacted a few guys to come and help. No one showed up. Some called and excused themselves. Others just didn't bother. Luckily for her that I called Ruben and he was able to come immediately. It took us various trips back and forward, but we helped her move.

Ruben has a conservative way of raising his children. For him boys play with the boys and girls play with the girls. He is very strict with his kids. Therefore, he always tries to be involved with the kids' lives. He makes sure that they are always being supervised by one of the family members. In order to accomplish that, the kids are babysat by only him and their mother. In addition, the grandmother on the mother's side helps out when there is a conflict with their schedules.

Ruben is such a good listener. He is the type of person that will hear you first without interrupting and then he'll make suggestions. I remember years ago I was having a problem communicating with my husband and I needed to talk with someone, I called Ruben and talked to him about it. He listened to me very carefully and then he gave me an advice that worked wonders. My brother to me is very supportive and he is always there when I need him. One thing I love about him is that whenever I need a friend to talk, it doesn't matter what he is doing, he is always willing to listen and give me an advice.

For example, there was a time when I was in high school. I met a girl named Arnina and not long after we became friends. In a short period of time my grades started to drop. Moreover, I began to be careless with my study habits also with my responsibilities around the house. We used to chat before we went to bed every night, but that one night was special. He started by saying, "I need your help. I have a problem and I need you to help me with it." At first I got worried.

"What is it?"

Then he said, "I have a very special person in my life."

"A girl hah!"

"Yes a girl."

"So what's the problem?"

"She has being acting different lately."

"Different? In what way?"

"Well she always behaves well, and she never has to be told of her responsibilities. I have always being proud of her success because of her hard work and dedication. And yes she is very special to me for that girl is you."

I remember when I heard that my eyes got full of tears and we hugged each other as I said to him, "I promise you that I'll do everything within my power to fix the situation."

He is younger than I am, but he is also mature. I always go to him whenever I have to make a difficult decision. Years ago when I was working as a receptionist at a medical office for almost a decade, I had all kinds of benefits and the trust that you can only get with so many years of serving the same person. My schedule wasn't easy and I wanted to change it.

One Sunday when I was reading the newspapers' job section I saw an ad that caught my attention because it was offering flexible hours and an excellent pay. For curiosity I went for an interview and I got the job. They wanted me to start in one week. I was not sure on what to do and as usual I called Ruben. "Ruben I need your help."

"What do you need this time Jackie?"

"Well this is what's happening." And I told him all about it.

After he thought for a moment he said, "Jackie you've been at that job for quite some time. If you leave now you'll lose everything you have accumulated. I know that you have your needs but you don't know anything about this new job and they are rushing you to start in one week. Honestly I don't like the idea."

"It is always a relief to have a talk with you brother. Thank you so much." To me Ruben's point of view was like a law I always obeyed. I decided to stay at my old job.

Ruben is the brother that I admire the most. His talents, virtues and good feeling make him one of a kind. He is a valuable citizen to the nation and to the world. For his good behavior and his good manners he has a special place in my life and in my heart. God bless Ruben D. Carty.

Jackie, a wife and mother of two, took Clare Thompson's Basic Writing class in the fall of 2003. Before taking the Basic Writing course, she was insecure about her writing. Now that she has taken the course, she says, "I feel much better and I know that I can be a better writer by just working hard."

My Sister Rose
by Harriet Osinae

Rose is my young sister and I have known her all my life. She lives in England with her Jamaican husband and their two children. In my eyes she is a winner. She is smart, kind, caring, strong willed, focused and a good listener. She never gives up, sets realistic goals for herself and persists at them until she succeeds.

Rose is tall, 5'9", light skinned, sharp features with a wide forehead and high cheekbones. She has large eyes and a wide mouth. One of her front teeth is crooked over the other making her endearing when she smiles. Her neck is long, and I would say graceful. She has beautiful long fingers and long legs which never quit. She attracts attention because of her height and dresses in bright colors with dark red lipstick. Rose is compelling and sometimes intimidating, considering her height, piercing gaze and dread locks.

My sister is smart and has influenced me academically. She is an Adolescent Psychologist with a Bachelor's Degree. Whenever I want to give up I think of her and I hang in there. Because she is highly educated, she has a good job with benefits. Recently she was promoted for her excellent work ethic, good attitude, and punctuality. She has persisted at this job despite all the hardships both at home and at work. This has inspired me to come back to college, complete my education and pursue a career. Last spring I called her up and said to her, "Rose I'm thinking of going back to school."

"You do that, Harriet."

"But I am afraid; I hear that it's hard."

"Hey, you are a smart cookie, you can do it. So go for it, ok?"

"Alright, I will give it a shot." And here I am back to school.

Rose is also kind and caring. I remember the difficult times when our mother passed away; she put aside her own grief and was there for me. She sat with me on my bed for hours on end at night, reassuring and comforting me because I could not handle the grief. I was having nightmares, and this is what she said to me, "Harriet, Mama is at a better place where there is neither pain nor suffering."

"I know but I miss her so."

"I miss her too." Holding each other, we cried and I drew strength from her. It was at this time that I dropped out of school. I said to her, for she was my confidant and we knew each other's secrets, "Rose, I don't want to go back to school. I can't concentrate for I think of Mama all the time. You know how she sometimes walked us to school. I can't bear it, for it's too painful."

"School work keeps my mind off Mama's sickness and death," she replied. "I am going to hang in there, but I also understand your pain, Harriet." Rose's strong will, persistence and determination kept her in school despite the circumstances. She graduated with honors; boy was I proud of her, my baby sister.

On top of that, Rose has persisted in a rocky marriage. One day her husband went out for the evening without telling her where. I thought this is it; she is leaving him for she was raving mad. But no, he explained himself, she listened, they worked it out and she stayed. Wow! When my husband went out with the boys and wasn't home when he was supposed to, I threatened to leave him. "This is it, I'm gone," I said to my sister Rose over the phone.

"At least you knew where he was."

"The selfish bastard; the least he could do was call and say he was running late."

"Think of your vows and your children."

After thinking it over, I stayed. Later on when my husband and I were talking, "She is smart, reasonable and beautiful," he said of Rose.

"I know," I answered, "I love her."

"She is an achiever, warm and her head is screwed on right," he went on.

"She will go far," I replied filled with admiration.

"Do you notice that her children's characters are like hers especially the big one?"

"Yes, now that you mention it."

Throughout our lives my sister has continually inspired and influenced me and is continuing to. She was always the commanding one and I was always the gentle one our parents said. She knows exactly what she wants and goes for it single mindedly. Recently I was talking to her husband and he said, "Your sister is the best thing that's happened to me."

"Oh?"

"Seriously, I am a lucky man." And I thought I was lucky too because Rose has continually encouraged me. She has influenced many of my decisions. Presently I am in college because of her ongoing support. My marriage is still strong because of her influence and advice and she has always been there for me through thick and thin.

In the spring of 2004, Harriet, who loves story telling, took Joanna Fortna's Basic Writing course. Harriet now values writing and says, "Sometimes I don't know that I have an opinion until I write it down. Writing to me is a form of self-expression."

Winter Crush
by Edgar Flores

It was a cold winter night in February; I sat on the sofa watching my new *Matrix* DVD while having a few drinks. I observed the snow fall from my warm and cozy sofa. The snow was falling as heavy as the rain falls in a monsoon. You could hardly see through the snowstorm. The roads were covered in so much snow it looked like a giant marshmallow exploded in the city. With no cars in sight it looked like a snowy ghost town. There were no plows on the road so the snow was quickly building up. The snow on the ground was so high that it reached the car windows. On this night I learned how gullible I can be, and how a bad choice can lead to a bad situation.

As I sat on the sofa watching my movie and having a drink, my roommate, Luis, entered the room. He asked me if I would accompany him to Worcester so he could see his girlfriend. I told him the weather was not good to drive in. He only replied with, "I will only drive 30 miles per hour, so we do not lose control of the car."

"Well that does seem reasonable, but maybe we should just wait until tomorrow when the plows have cleared the road," I replied.

"You mean you would let me go out in this weather all alone?"

"I do not want you to drive anywhere in this weather. It is not safe for driving. We live an hour away from Worcester and in this weather it can take two or three hours to get there. Why don't you wait until tomorrow when the weather is better?" I felt like I was begging him to stay home.

He continued to taunt me like a bullfighter waving a red flag in front of a bull. "Come on Edgar. We will head to Worcester and spend the night there. I will buy you breakfast and lunch tomorrow. Please." He had the look of a sad puppy on his face. He sounded pitiful.

"Okay ... Okay I'll go with you, but you are buying me breakfast, lunch and dinner for the next three weekends," I said. This was a small price to pay for making me go out in this dangerous weather.

He answered me faster than a fox runs from bloodhounds. "Deal! Now go get ready while I call Yadira (his girlfriend), and tell her that we are on the way."

As I started getting dressed, I looked out my bedroom window and saw that the parking lot was covered in snow. The roads were unplowed and there were no moving cars in sight. I asked him again if he was sure about taking the drive to Worcester. He said that he was positive. There must have been two feet of snow on the ground. It was high enough to cover our knees. We quickly dug the car out, but we had difficulty starting it. We had to move the car back and forth, putting it in drive and then reverse until we were free and in motion. As we left the parking lot, all I could think of was why I was going. I felt guilty for agreeing to go with him. Maybe if I had said no, he might have changed his mind.

"Luis, can you please slow down? You are driving well over thirty miles per hour and the car is starting to fish tail. We are not even on the highway yet and you are already speeding," I said.

"Don't worry. This car has traction control. We won't lose control, but I will slow down just for you," he replied with sarcasm. It had only been half an hour and we

were about five minutes from home. The city looked like a blanket of snow and we were deep within its covers. It felt like we were never going to get there.

We finally got on the highway and it looked horrifying. It was covered in snow. We could barely see the road, but we continued on. The snow was coming down rapidly. It looked like we were in a scene from the movie *Star Wars* traveling in light speed.

"Hey look Luis. We are in the *Star Wars* trilogy. Looks like we are traveling in the Millennium Falcon at light speed, doesn't it?"

"Yeah and you look like Princess Leia," he replied.

We began laughing. At that point the car began to fish tail. I thought he was messing around, but in reality he was losing control of the car. The car slid ninety degrees to the right. The oncoming traffic was coming towards the passenger side door. The bright headlights from the other cars were blinding me. I didn't even see the truck coming. The car whipped around and I heard a sound I will never forget. It was the sound of the eighteen-wheeler crushing the back end of the car. The roof started caving in on us. It came down so low we had to lean over on our sides to keep from getting crushed. The rear windows shattered and all I could feel was the chill of the winter night. The snow was getting into the car and into my mouth. My life flashed before my eyes as the car was dragged by the truck.

Then, all of a sudden the car came free from the wheels of the truck, but only to spin around and go right back under the truck, front end first. I was in shock. I could not believe what was happening. It felt like we were moving in slow motion. I could barely hear what was going on around me. The sounds were muffled. I don't know if I was screaming or not; I was in a daze. All I could do was watch as the front end of the car got mangled by the truck. I could see the ground because somehow we were lifted into the air at an angle. Then all of a sudden the car whipped out from underneath the truck and we were at a standstill.

"Oh my God, what just happened?" I could finally speak. I had a sharp pain in my foot and my head was throbbing. My foot was stuck underneath the crushed dashboard.

"Oh Jesus, Edgar, are you okay? You are bleeding," Luis asked. At that point I was panicking. I felt something warm on the side of my face. It was blood.

I heard voices coming toward us and someone started banging on the only window that was still intact.

"Are you guys okay in there?" It was another driver who had managed to pull off the road to avoid becoming a part of the accident. The man smashed the window and helped us crawl out of the car. The driver of the truck quickly made his way over to us. The truck driver never felt the impact. He only stopped because at the last moment he glanced in the driver's side mirror only to see us being crushed. As we waited for help to arrive, we stood speechless as we stared at what was left of the car. I was amazed that we were still alive.

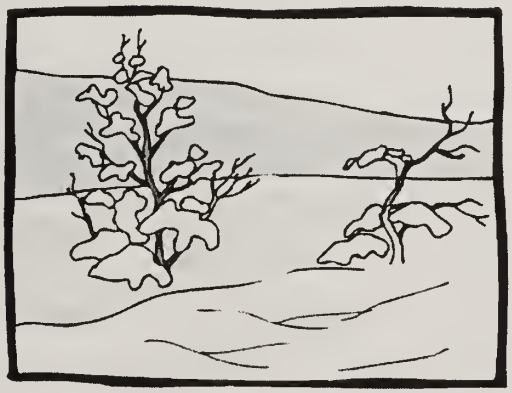
A state trooper, who was handling another accident, ran over to us. He stood tall and firm like an oak tree. He reminded me of a drill sergeant. His uniform looked well pressed even for the weather conditions. "Are you guys okay?" he asked with a stern voice. "What the hell were you guys doing out here in this weather anyways? Do you need an ambulance? Can you guys talk?" he kept asking questions without waiting for a reply.

"I think we are okay sir. I just banged my head and my foot was crushed, but I do not think it is broken," I replied.

"Well maybe I should call an ambulance just in case," the state trooper said. When the ambulance arrived they checked both Luis and me for injuries. And even though we did not want to, the EMT took us to the hospital. The doctor on call took x-rays and did some observations. All they found were minor bumps, bruises and abrasions. My foot was only sprained, but it felt like it was broken.

When we were released from the emergency room about four hours later we had a choice of walking or calling a cab. We decided to walk home. I don't think either one of us wanted to be riding in a car. We didn't speak the whole way home. The event that occurred that night was not a topic that we wanted to discuss. Our thoughts and flashbacks were good enough.

Even though I was not the one driving that night, I have become more cautious when driving. I learned not to second guess my judgment and follow my instincts. I thank God everyday for giving us another chance at life. I think back on that night and realize that it is a miracle that we are still alive. I have learned not to take my life for granted and value every moment that I spend with my friends and family.



Edgar, 29, is a CNA. He lives in Lawrence and plans to complete a B.S. degree in Nursing. His interests include toy collecting, reading, movies, and church. Edgar feels that Basic Writing with Clare Thompson was a much-needed refresher course for him.

My Most Precious Gift
by Anita Sawyer

It was a very hot day that August afternoon in summer of 1994. Just the day before there was brownout covering most of northern California. The power went out around noon and came back on around 8:00 that night. My daughter, Nicole, who was eight at the time, and I were visiting my sister Cindy and her husband Billy in their home in Concord, California. It was on this day that I learned how the most precious gift you have in life can be taken away at any moment.

Cindy and I thought that it would be a good day to rent some movies and relax in a nice and cool air conditioned house. Billy was going to barbeque some steaks he had marinated earlier in the day. I had made a nice tossed salad loaded with a nice variety of lettuces, bright cherry tomatoes, crisp cucumbers, thinly sliced red onion and chopped green and red peppers. We were looking forward to a nice evening of good food and great entertainment. It was getting close to dinner so we wanted to go get some movies and hurry back. Nicole was in the bathroom, and as always she liked to read in there; I knew she would be awhile. I knocked on the bathroom door and said, "Nicole, Aunt Cindy and I are going to get some movies. We'll be right back. Stay here with Uncle Billy." I then ran out to the garage to get in the car.

Cindy had said to Billy, "Nita and I are going to get some movies. Nicole is in the bathroom. Make sure she stays in the house. We'll be right back."

Billy said, "Ok."

The sun was beginning to set as we got back to Cindy's house. The air was beginning to cool off. As we pulled into the garage, all was well with the world. We entered the brightly lit kitchen. Cindy had stenciled a variety of fruits and vegetables as a border near the top of the wall. We could smell the onions and peppers from the salad I had made earlier. Lucy, their big black Labrador, trotted into the kitchen, her nails clicking on the tile floor, her tail wagging indicating she was happy to see us back.

As we walked into the living room, Billy had just come in from the patio where he had been cooking the steaks. A strong scent of mesquite wood had wafted into the room. My mouth began to water in anticipation for dinner. I didn't see Nicole, so I asked, "Where's Nicole?"

Billy said, "I thought she was with you. She came running out of the bathroom just as you were leaving. I told her you had just left and to look and see if you were still in the garage, but that if you weren't to come back in. When she didn't come back I assumed she was with you."

Cindy almost yelled, "What do you mean? I told you not to let her go anywhere!"

Billy is the quiet type and isn't one to panic. He seemed concerned, but just said, "I'm sure she is just down the street. She couldn't have gone very far." I, of course, went into immediate panic. Nicole was only eight years old. We were in a strange town. We didn't know anyone else who lived there. Terrible thoughts were running through my mind. She was very trusting like most kids her age. She was always a very friendly child. When she was three and a half years old, she went trick or treating for the first time. The first door she knocked on she walked right into the house like she lived there. It was funny and cute at first, but I could just imagine her doing that again, and some crazy

person living there. She was a very beautiful child and I could see someone just picking her up.

We told Billy to stay in just in case she came back. Cindy and I immediately went out looking for her. I tried to remain calm, saying to myself, "We'll find her." We started heading back to the video store. The first place we stopped was a Circle K store. I ran in and asked the clerk at the counter, "Have you seen a little girl with dark brown eyes and long dark brown hair wearing a lavender shorts and shirt?"

He said, "No, but I will keep an eye out for her." I thanked him and went back to the car. We made several stops before reaching the video store. Cindy and I weren't really talking. I was concentrating, looking down every street we went through. We checked inside the video store, but no one had seen her. I said to my sister with fear now in my voice, "Cindy, where could she be?"

Cindy said calmly, "Nita, don't worry. We'll find her. Nothing bad ever happens around here." I said to myself, "That's easy for her to say; she doesn't have kids." Before we knew it darkness had set in. We went back to Cindy's house to see if Billy had heard anything, No one had called. I was hysterical. I called 911. 1 tried to calm down as I said to the dispatcher, "My eight-year-old daughter and I are visiting from out of town. My sister and I left the house leaving my daughter with her husband. Unbeknownst to him she ran out of the house looking for us and now we can't find her. We have looked all over the neighborhood!"

The dispatcher asked me, "Are you from Arizona?"

I couldn't say it fast enough, "Yes!"

The dispatcher then continued to say, "A young couple walking with their child in a stroller met your daughter when she asked them if they knew where Landana Street was. They said they didn't know so they took Nicole to their house and called the police. Let me give you their address. A police officer is waiting for you there." I gave Cindy the phone so she could get the information since she knew the area. My knees were weak so I had to sit down. I was still very upset, but relieved. I was crying when we got back in the car to get Nicole. Cindy said, "Nita, you need to calm down. You're going to scare Nicole when we get there." I tried my best to do that by taking some deep breaths.

It seemed like it took forever to get there. As we were driving up the street I saw Nicole standing on the sidewalk next to the couple and the police officer. She looked so tiny to me. She was wearing a large pink sweater that the woman had given her to wear. I got out of the car and walked up to her. She was smiling. She seemed calm. I hugged her very tightly. I didn't want to let her go.

The woman said to me, "We kept her outside with us so she wouldn't get scared."

I asked Nicole, "What happened? Why didn't you stay with Uncle Billy?"

She said, "Mommy, I told you to wait that I wanted to come with you. Then I tried to find you."

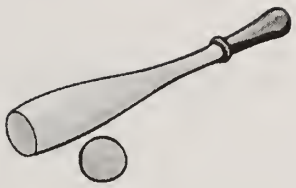
I told the officer and the couple what had happened at the house. They all agreed that they were glad everything turned out all right. I thanked them all profusely and we got back in the car and headed back to my sister's house. I said, "Nicole, please don't ever run out of the house like that again."

She said, "Mommy, I'm sorry. I was just trying to find you, but I didn't know which way to go."

When Nicole went to look for us she evidently went running in the opposite direction and got lost. I don't know how she thought she could have found us. Nicole was taught to be wary of strangers. She later told me that she asked this particular couple for help because they were walking their child and that they seemed safe. I still couldn't help but think to myself, "What if we hadn't found her?" I would have had to call my parents in Arizona. How upset everyone would be. How do parents of missing children handle the stress of the situation? My child was only missing for a few hours and I was a basket case.

We were very lucky that night. I thank God every day that she wasn't harmed. I am proud of Nicole for not panicking and asking for help. I am grateful to the couple who helped her. Nicole learned never to run out of the house like that again. I learned to never take anything for granted and how the most precious gift you have in life can be taken away at any moment.

Anita is an Early Childhood Education major who lives in Methuen. She is married and has three children. Anita feels more comfortable about her skills since taking Basic Writing with Clare Thompson in the Spring 2004 semester.



My Unforgettable Trip to Homeplate
by Lenin Tejeda

One of my childhood dreams was to hit the winning game homerun in a little league baseball tournament that took place in my city. However, I never thought that moment would come. One Saturday morning, my mother took me to the baseball field to play what I liked to play, baseball. This wasn't just another Saturday morning. The day was clear and sunny. The blue sky was decorated with white stratus clouds and the yellow radiant sun. A nice calm wind was blowing gently and the green grass was wet because it rained the day before.

The game was going as planned. My team was on the field. I was the second baseman and a good defensive player. I liked to play that position because there was constant action and I could see everything from a better angle. Although I was afraid of making any errors, it didn't affect my defensive ability. As soon as the ball came toward my direction, most of the time, I did what I needed to, catch the ball and make the out.

I was having fun, but my team was losing by a run. Our pitcher was my closest friend on the team because we lived in the same neighborhood. He was a very good player. At that time he had a perfect record of five wins and no losses. I was glad to be his teammate because I didn't have to face him, but he was still losing that game.

We were in the dugout when I told him that I was going to make him win the game. When I told him that, he looked at me with a doubtful face and didn't say a word. Maybe he thought I was a bad hitter. I knew I wasn't a good hitter; my batting average was low, but I didn't care. I just liked being on the field and to get my white uniform dirty with the brown dirt around the infield. I also knew that I could hit homeruns. I used to take a batting practice before the game and I could hit the ball hard enough to get a homerun.

My first time at bat, I struck out as usual. It was getting late in the game when in the bottom of the last inning, with two outs and a runner on third base, I was at bat. The game was up to me. All I thought about was hitting a homerun so we could win the game, until the other team's coach took the pitcher out and brought in the closer. The closer had pitched to me in previous games and he struck me out with three fast balls. He had the fastest ball in the whole league. The first ball that he threw to me came so fast that I didn't see it coming. It was a strike. A replay from all the strikeouts that I had before went through my mind. I said to myself, "Here I go again, two strikes away to strike out."

It was just a few seconds before the next pitch came. It was a high ball. At that moment I thought about waiting for ball four, but I was aware that his control was very accurate. With a clear mind, I waited for the next pitch. It was a strike. The confused

umpire without any hesitation and having the total authority of the game said, "Strike out."

Being confused with the umpire's call, I turned around and said to him, "I just have two strikes, not three."

He realized that I was right, apologized to me, and said with a loud voice, "Strike two!"

I felt a lot better, so much better that I didn't care if the pitcher threw to me his fast ball. I got my confidence back. I was eager, waiting for the next pitch, but right when the pitcher got ready to throw the ball, I asked for time out and stepped out of the batting box, took a deep breath and told myself, "I can't let my team down, not today."

I could only hear the voices of my teammates saying, "You can do it, come on."

Holding the bat firmly, I went into the batting box and got ready to hit. I was looking at the pitcher when suddenly the white ball flew out of his hand. It was his fastball. I had made the biggest swing that I had ever made. I felt the vibration of the bat in both of my sweaty hands and heard the crack that the aluminum bat made when I hit the ball. I heard a noise behind me. People were saying, "You did it."

I didn't know what was happening until I looked up at the blue sky and saw the white ball flying over the right side of the unreachable green concrete wall. It was a two-run homerun. Full of joy and pride and with my right arm lifted in the air, I started running around the bases. I was running as slowly as possible because I didn't want that moment to go away. I was the hero of a game for the first time in my life.

As a result of my homerun, two runs scored, winning the game. I was running to home plate where all my teammates were waiting for me all excited, especially the pitcher. When I crossed home plate, all my teammates surrounded me and lifted me in the air. I was looking around for my friend, the pitcher, just to see what he had to say. When I finally saw him, I said, "Did I tell you this or what?"

He laughed and said, "You did it. Wow! I can't believe it."

It's been a long eight years since that moment happened. However, I can still feel the vibration of the aluminum bat. Even though I never got to be a good baseball player, I feel great because I have that memory and because one of my many childhood dreams came true. That game was very exciting for me, not because I hit the winning game homerun. It was exciting because nobody expected me to hit a homerun in that situation, not even myself, not against that pitcher. From that experience I learned that even down two strikes I still can have hope to get the best out of me.

Lenin, 21, is a Graphic Design major who likes to draw and listen to music. He took Basic Writing with Harlan Kroff in the fall of 2003.

The Best in the Worst
by Steven Roy

I was 13 years old and I heard that The Pines Seafood Restaurant at the end of the road I lived on was hiring, so I went down and filled out a job application. My older brother Scott used to work there, so I used him as a reference. He had a reputation as a good worker while he was there so I figured it might help me. He warned me that it was a lousy job but I didn't care. I wanted a job so badly because there was this dirt bike that I wanted to buy. Also, there wasn't much to do in my town so I might as well work, if I could.

Norman, the owner, called me for an interview. I went down to the restaurant and he hired me for a dishwasher/prep cook position. He remembered my brother, Scott, and gave me the job. He told me Scott was a dependable worker and he expected the same from me. I assured him he would not be disappointed.

I couldn't believe it when I got hired; I was so excited. There wasn't anyone my age that had a job. It only paid $4.25 an hour, minimum wage at the time, but I didn't care because I was going to have my own money. I wouldn't have to ask my father for money anymore, something I hated to do. I was anxious to start and even more anxious to get my first paycheck.

When I started it was obvious from the beginning that Norman was the "big dog" in the kitchen. He was all business with no sense of humor or respect for others. He often barked orders and verbally intimidated us. There would be many times I would have to maintain self control because he would be extremely harsh to me and other employees. I can remember one shift, during a slow night, Norman caught me leaning against the countertop and said in his typical mean voice, "If you got time to lean, you got time to clean," and made me scrub clean the inside of the trash barrels. Norman was good at making someone feel belittled or worthless. There were many nights of unappreciated hard work that I wanted to quit, but didn't because I'm an optimist. I would tell myself it was worth the paycheck because I could buy the things I wanted. His wife, Anne, was the complete opposite of him. She was kind, soft spoken and never yelled. Everyone liked working with her.

There were two other employees that worked there when I started. A girl named Sherrie, whom I went to school with, was a couple of years older than I was and very funny. There was also a kid named John who was older than the both of us. We all became good friends, since we had a common hatred of Norman.

After the newness of the job wore off, I realized that it was real hard work at a fast pace. I usually started at 4:30 p.m. and would begin by stocking up the fridge right behind my work station. During the dinner time rush it was my job to weigh out the different size orders of seafood and batter them so Norman could cook them in the fryolators. This was a very dirty job. I would go home reeking like seafood and batter. The odor would infest my skin and clothes. It was so bad I had to leave my sneakers outside on my porch.

After the rush had come and gone it was my duty to start the cleaning. I had to clean my station and then wash all the dirty dishes by hand, since Norman was too cheap to buy a dishwasher. After that I would sweep and mop the entire kitchen area. The last

thing I would do before calling it a night was empty the smelliest trash barrels I have ever come in contact with.

Eventually my pride and self-respect took over and I decided I was not going to work for minimum wage anymore. I was a good worker and always on time. I had been working in grueling and often illegal conditions for almost two years and I deserved a raise. I asked Norman about getting a pay increase and he flat out said, "No." He didn't even say he would think about it, so I quit on the spot, feeling good about myself as I left.

I'm glad the worst job of my life was my first. I learned a lot from it. I became good at saving money, which I still am today. I also know how to better deal with difficult people of authority. I can take an "earful" from a boss and I don't let it get to me. Also, as a foreman at my last job, I never intentionally disrespected someone. Even if they screwed up bad, I tried to maintain a calm voice and not use degrading words while showing them what they did wrong. I believe happy employees are productive employees, myself included. Work is something we must do that takes up a major part of our lives and I don't want to be miserable during it.

Steven is a 26-year-old Engineering Science major who lives in Hampstead, NH. Before taking Basic Writing, he felt that "Writing has always been my weakest point as a student." Since taking Margaret Bergeron's class in the fall of 2003, he says, "Writing is a series of steps that I can work through just like a trigonometry problem."

A Job I Will Never Forget
by Joseph Zaarour

Throughout the years I have held many jobs. Some I liked and others I hated, but the best job I have ever held was as a receptionist in a hotel in Lebanon. It is true that after my first day on the job I wanted to quit. However, things got better and I decided to stay. I liked that job because the managers as well as all my coworkers were very nice people to deal with, I earned a lot of experience in dealing with customers and I have met a lot of friends.

After I lost the job that I have held for four years and desperately needed a job to pay my bills, one of my friends referred me to one of the managers of a newly opened hotel in a busy area in a major tourist location. One day three of my friends and I went to watch a movie in a theatre nearby that hotel and when I saw the hotel I felt like stopping by and asking for some information about the manager. So I went to the reception desk and I asked an employee about the manager. It was about nine o'clock at night. The manager was there, and he was very friendly to me. I felt like I knew this man for a long time. We shared a conversation about the work: duties and schedule. Also I told him about my experience which was limited at that time. The position I applied for was at night from eleven at night to seven in the morning. He even asked me if I wanted to start right away. It was a big surprise for me because I never thought that it would be so easy to get a job offer. Next to that I was on my way to watch a movie. So we agreed to start my new job in two days.

Two days later I started my new job. My duties included: answering phone calls, offering any help the customers needed, guest's check in and check out. Add to that keeping an eye on the whole situation in the hotel. I had to perform all those duties while I was standing up especially if there was any customer at the reception lobby. I remember that one day I had to stand up, barely moving for more than four hours because the owner and some of his friends were present and having some beer in the lobby. I hated the work hours because that was at night, but that did not matter after the first week because I got to meet all the employees and they were all nice people to deal with. However the main reason that I stayed in that job was a woman that attracted my attention. She was an employee there also. I liked her very much. Things went out of our control and in a little while we developed a secret relationship. I was not supposed to have a special relationship with her because that was not allowed between employees especially at work. Besides that she was the owner's niece and if he knew at that time, he would have fired me in no time at all.

The manager was so smart and he had lots of experience in the hotel business. He treated me very nicely; my guess was that he wanted to gain my trust especially because I was running the hotel by myself at night. During the entire period of my work we never had an argument; in addition we developed a strong friendly relationship. We used to share conversations about everything: the business, the customers, the owner, the employees and about women, too. What impressed me was that he was very generous always offering me food, coffee, even drinks and that was not allowed for any of the employees.

In a short while after I started the job, I realized that all the employees were very good people to deal with. They taught me how to deal with customers and how to stay

away from problems. All of them offered me any help I might need, and even some of them gave me their phone numbers so I can call them at home if I needed any help. I still remember that night when I called a coworker at three o'clock in the morning asking him to come and help me with a drunk customer who was yelling, screaming and falling down on the floor. We started to calm him down and warned him that we would call the police if he didn't go up to his room. After we promised him to deliver a bottle of whisky to his room he agreed to leave the lobby. We helped him reach his bed while struggling with his heavy weight. My fellow worker was not upset at all and he told me that I could call him any time I want. We all quickly trusted each other. We shared our secrets, joked together and split the tips fairly between us. We became friends; sometimes we used to go out on our free time. Even though after I stopped working at the hotel I remained friends with many of them.

That was my first experience in dealing with people from all around the world. We used to have customers from France, Sweden, England, all the Arab countries and a lot more. That was hard for me at the beginning because I had to deal with different nationalities and different behaviors. The big issue was how to deal with the high-class Lebanese and the Syrian customers. In Lebanon at that time a lot of people used to carry guns especially bodyguards and important people when they came into the hotel, so it was better not to have any problem with any of them. I still remember one night when I came into the hotel and the manager told me that we would be receiving some important customers from Syria with their bodyguards. At one o'clock in the morning six men entered to the lobby, and when I saw them I thought that I was in a battle or something. They looked like fighters with all kinds of guns on them. I welcomed them and when I was handing them their keys a guy asked me: "What floor number will we have our rooms in?"

"In the fifth floor sir," I answered.

"Wow! Why on the fifth floor? It is a long way," he replied.

"You are using the elevator and not your feet, sir," I said.

Then when everybody in the lobby started laughing loudly, I realized that I shouldn't have said that. Because when I looked at the guy's eyes, I knew that at that time he was ready to kill me. I stayed holding my breath until his fellows convinced him that I didn't mean it, and then they went to their rooms. Then I went to my favorite sofa in the lobby where I used to spend the slow time, reading a book or watching TV with my eyes half closed.

Some of the customers were excellent people and they even offered me jobs at their businesses. We used to share long conversations at the time they came to the lobby to have some drinks. Some of them used to tell me about their problems with their wives, their children and their families. From their stories I used to feel like I had developed a whole picture about the way these people lived in their countries. Sometimes I wished that I could go visit these countries and other times I felt sad for the way some people still behave in the twentieth century. After many conversations with some customers, we became friends and they invited me to join them at a restaurant, a night club or the casino of Lebanon. They were always the ones who paid even for gambling. It used to offend them every time I offered to share any of the payments. That would be disrespectful behavior toward them, at least in their culture.

During three years I have gained a lot of experience in how to deal with people. In addition to patience and a job experience, I discovered the mystery of reading the eyes, before I had read or heard about it in any book. My manager gave me the clue and after practicing it for many years I feel that I am still able to tell from people's eyes their intentions and the way I should use to deal with them. On the other hand I enjoyed having lots of friends from all around the world with different types and levels of people. After all these years I am still able to sit down in a chair and let my memory fly back to that hotel to join the girl I once loved, the people I once met and felt in some way very close to, and my friends and their situations after these years. I wonder sometimes if they remember me as I always do.

Joseph is a Business Management major who lives in Lawrence. After taking Harlan Kroff's Basic Writing class, he says, "Now I feel confident about expressing myself through writing."

An Excellent Medium
by Jose Alvarado

Many people think that television is a very important medium, and I agree with them. Almost every person in this country has a television; it does not matter if they are poor or rich because almost everybody can buy a television. Television has had a very good impact in my life. The effect of television is very helpful in my life because it can influence me in a good way. Television, a very special medium, provides me with entertainment, gives me information about the whole world, and let's me see the news in a different way.

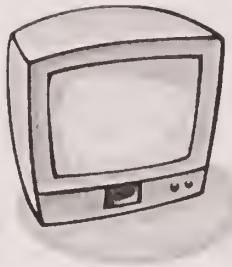
Television is a good way for me to obtain entertainment. It is one of the best things that television possesses because I can have fun in my own house without the necessity of going out. I like to watch TV shows which can transport me from reality to fiction in a short time. For example, one of my favorite shows on TV is *Smallville*. This particular show makes me go away from reality for a few minutes because it possesses a lot of surreal things on it. *Smallville* entertains me a lot because it is a fiction show about Superman. It shows how Superman is developing his powers and how he copes with all the problems in his town. I love watching television at home because if I combine the entertainment and the comfort of my house I am going to have a wonderful environment. If I get bored with any specific program, I just have to take the remote control and change it. Television entertains me and gives me the opportunity to have a little fun at any moment I watch it.

Television is a very good medium for me because it does not just give me fun as other media do. It also gives me information about many things that other media cannot give me. It brings me information in a way that is very easy for me to get. Television is convenient for me because through it I can visualize and listen to the information at the same time. For example, on the radio I can listen to the information, but I cannot watch it. I watch a news program which is very good because it shows the information as it really is. Television brings me the information in the best way. All the information I want to know is right there for me. Some of the programs that I watch are *Sport Center*, and *The Ear*. On TV I get all I want; for example, *Sport Center* provides me information about all sports, such as baseball, football and basketball. On the other hand, *The Ear* gives me information about famous people like actors and singers. From other media I cannot obtain the information in the same way as television because the information on it is provided in a particular way. On television I can hear and watch the information at the same time and it is really good.

Television provides me news that can be hard for other media to do. It gives me the news about any country and shows me how this country or this place is at the time the news is happening. One of the news programs I watch is *First Impact*. This brings me news about anything I can be interested about. When something happens in any country, I hear and see what is really happening. For example, I am informed about what is happening in Iraq and I am far away from that country right now. That is how television keeps me informed. All people who work in this medium are very sure about the news that they are going to send. It is going to be watched by many people. This medium is the best way to obtain fresh news.

Television is a particular way to obtain information about any issues that I could be interested in. It is a very powerful medium because this is the best and easiest way to be well informed. Television is very important in my life because it provides many good things that are important to me. I am sure about the fact that the information that I receive through TV is very good. The entertainment that I get on TV is complete because in my house I can have all the comfort I want. In conclusion, television makes my life complete because it gives me all I need to be informed and entertained. Even though I do not have much time to watch TV, it gives me all the things I need, entertainment, information and news about the world that for other media would not be easy to provide. I have learned many things through the information that I receive from TV and have had a lot of fun watching it.

Jose is a machine operator who is studying Accounting at NECC. He has one daughter, Liliangel, and is interested in baseball, dance, and music. Jose feels more comfortable with writing after taking Joanna Fortna's Basic Writing class in the spring of 2004.



The Magic Box
by Anastacia Lake

I am a very busy person. My job and school requires most of my time, but after a very long day of hard work I still find the time to watch television at night. When I turn on the television, I feel as if I am another person. All of the tiredness disappears from my body. I consider the television to be a part of my family because it helps me relax and to have fun. It also helps me to learn about decorations. This very important tool also helps me to get information about history and current events that occur every day in the world.

To begin with television helps me learn about history. As evidence, one day I was watching the History Channel and I got to learn a little bit about Adolph Hitler's life. I learned that he was abused when he was a child. As a result, he had lots of anger inside him. He considered himself an ugly person; for this reason he didn't like his nose. Adolph Hitler was Austrian born in 1889, and he died in 1945. The founder of the German Nazi Party, chancellor of the Third Reich, and absolute dictator, he used to hate Jewish people. I could never forget the way he killed millions of Jews. He was one of the cruelest men in history. Television inspires me to be much more informed about history. Now I have more knowledge about Hitler's life. If my children come up with questions I will have the right answer.

Television also helps me learn about different ways of decorating. I will never forget the first time I saw Martha Stewart's program. At first sight I got hooked on her show. It was really amazing. I set up my schedule because I wanted to see it again. I have learned so many things from Martha Stewart's show. For instance, last year I gave my friend a gift. It was her birthday and I didn't have money to buy her an expensive present. I searched my closet and I found something that I thought was really beautiful. I went to the store and I got some exotic ribbons and I wrapped the present. The following day was the party. I went to her house and I told her, "Happy birthday. I hope that you like this present."

The next day while I was cooking the phone rang. When I answered the phone it was Maria. I told her, "I thought you were sleeping because we had gone to sleep very late last night."

Maria said, "I am really sleepy, but I wanted to tell you that I love the present you gave me. Thank you so much."

It means so much to hand someone a gift that I wrapped myself with care. Martha Stewart inspires me to have a beautiful house the four seasons of the year. As a result I have learned that a well-decorated home makes life seem more beautiful, and more organized.

In addition, television helps me to learn about current events that happen in my country. Last month, I went to the drugstore to get something for my allergies. While I was searching for a good medication, I heard someone crying. I turned around and I approached the lady who was crying. I asked her, "Can I help you, dear?"

She said, "Something really bad just had happened in my country."

Then I asked, "Where are you from?"

She answered me, "I am from the Dominican Republic."

I got so nervous that I shook the lady and I said, "Please tell me what happened. I am from that same country too."

She said, "An earthquake shook the entire country." Without doubt I forgot about my allergies and I ran home. As soon as I got home I took the phone and I tried to get in touch with my brother. It was impossible. There were no signals at all. Suddenly I remembered that I could get some information from the television. I tuned in to the Super Channel Caribe; this is a channel from the Dominican Republic. Immediately I saw the reporter talking about the bad news. I saw the paramedics; the police and people were running everywhere. My spirit came back to my body when I heard the reporter say the location of the disaster. It was far away from my brother's house. Finally late that afternoon I got in touch with Victor. When he answered the phone I said, "Thanks to God you are safe!"

Victor replied, "I was trying to call you, but it was impossible."

I asked him, "What about Margarita and her children?"

He said, "Everybody is safe." Since that day I have learned that television is a very important tool that helps me to keep in touch with current events that happen in my country every day.

In the same way, television also helps me relax. When I feel tired and full of stress Denise Austin's tape helps me relax because I exercise for about thirty minutes every night. Moreover I could never forget the day when I saw this wonderful commercial on television. It was about Denise Austin's videotape. They were talking about healthy food and how to stay in good shape. Suddenly the phone rang. When I answered the phone, it was my neighbor who lives on the second floor. She asked me, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I am watching a very interesting TV program."

She replied, "What kind of programs?"

I said, "It is about exercise."

Carmen asked me, "Is it okay with you if I come down and watch the program?"

I said, "The back door is open. I will be waiting for you."

When Carmen got home, I already had a bowl with some fruit for her. We were looking at the program, and once in a while we made comments. Carmen and I were very interested in the things that we heard about the benefits we would have if we followed the advice.

She said, "Why don't we buy that videotape and start doing some exercise?"

I said, "That is a good idea." Since that day my neighbor and I started with a workout routine. Denise Austin inspires me how to eat healthy and stay in good shape.

Television has influenced me on how to keep in touch with events that happen in the world, to relax when I feel tired, to learn about decorations, and finally to learn about history. My view about this very important way of communication has changed in a positive way. As a result I have learned that if we tune in to interesting programs we will learn much more than what we already know.

Therefore, television has influenced my life in many different ways because I only watch instructive programs and I can't imagine life without that electronic apparatus that transmits to us events that happen all over the world.

Anastacia is a childcare provider who lives in Lawrence. Taking Clare Thompson's Basic Writing class in the fall of 2003 has improved her writing and given her more confidence.

The Flavor of Life
by Ronan De Leon

It was 1993 in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic. My mother had sent me to the store to buy some sopita, which increases the flavor of food. I was getting closer to the store when I saw a man at the front of the store dancing to a beat. The man was happy, and he had a big smile on his face. The movement looked cool and complicated. I wanted to learn how to dance like that.

I asked the man, "What is the music you're dancing to?"

He replied, "Salsa."

I started to listen to the music and it was making my hands move, then my waist, then my feet. Without knowing, I was trying to move my feet in the way that the man was doing it. He looked at me and called to me, "Hey kid." I went up to him, and he said to me, "In order to dance salsa you have to feel the beat, and let your body follow the beat of the music." He started teaching me the steps. As I was trying to do the steps, I was enjoying the music more and more. I know how to dance the merengue and the bachata because that was the only thing I used to dance and listen to. That was until I felt the happiness and the feeling of being alive while learning the steps and listening to the fast rhythms and the beat I couldn't resist dancing to. Salsa increases the flavor of my life. Dancing to it makes me feel happier and alive.

When school ended in June of 1993, I started to attend parties with my cousins and uncles. I realized that playing a salsa at a party was like adding sopita to the food. The trumpet, the saxophone, the guira, and the piano would put everyone in the mood to dance. Even though salsa requires knowledge and dedication to have full control of the steps, the sound of the instruments, the fast pace of the beat, and the swing that comes with it will make you move your body. Salsa makes your heart dance to the beat of the drums, your hands move to the beat of saxophones, and your body move to the sound.

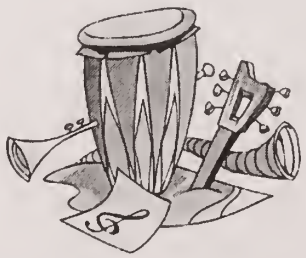
When I'm at a party, I like to be dancing. I don't care what kind of music is being played. If there are females around to dance with, you will see me on the dance floor. But I enjoy the party more when I'm dancing salsa, since salsa is not as easy as the bachata and not as simple as the merengue. The Cuban rhythm gets into my veins, and into my blood, and then is in my body making me feel happy and more alive. The more I dance salsa and the more I listen to it, the better I get and the more I like it. While I'm dancing, I can move my feet like art. I can do fancy steps and do movements the people enjoy watching. I like being the center of attention at a party, and dancing the rhythms of salsa makes me get that attention and I have the reputation of being a good dancer. People leave me solo on the dance floor to watch me dance salsa.

Salsa has many levels of rhythms; it could be fast, slow, or in between. Songs like *In Motion* by Bobby Valentin and *Con Salsa, Con Ritmo* by Manny Oquendo, are songs whose fast beat makes me take the dance floor for my own and express the happiness and all the life I have in me to the people. One day, I was at a party in Lawrence. It was around 3:30 a.m. and everyone was just talking and drinking. I told the DJ to play *La Negra Tiene Tunbao* by Celia Cruz. Once the music started playing, it was like the winning goal had been scored, and everyone stood up to scream and express their happiness. Everyone stood up and started singing, "La negra tiene tunbao, lo tiene tunbao! lo tiene tunbao! Y no camina de lao, y no camina de lao! y no camina de lao!

Asucarrrr." It translates to Celia singing, "The black girl has it down." Then the backup, "Has it down, has it down!" Then Celia, "She doesn't walk sideway." Then the backup, "And doesn't walk sideways, and doesn't walk sideways! Sugarrr!" This song is about a beautiful young woman who is not ashamed of who she is, and she doesn't care what people say about her. I like this song since the words and the emotion in the song, and the life within the music give people energy and put them in a dancing mood. The fast beat and the sound of the kettledrums, the emotions and the life within the music lead people to have fun.

Even though I enjoy dancing salsa a lot, it's also good to listen to. There are a lot of stories described in the words and in the rhythms of salsa. The soft sound of the trumpet, the piano, and the words gets my attention. *El Varon* by Willie Colon is one of the songs I like to listen to. It describes the story of a man named Andres who has a son named Simon. Andres wants Simon to be like him, "a real man," so he sends his son to Europe. In Europe, Simon turns gay and he gets rejected by Andres. Simon then dies of a sickness. Andres cries for ten years after Simon's death. One of my favorite lines is where Colon says, "No te quejes Andres, no te quejes de nada. Si del cielo te caen limones aprende hacer limonadas." It translates to, "Don't complain Andres, don't complain for nothing. If lemons fall from the skies, then learn how to make lemonade." The message that I get from these lines is that as humans, we have to be satisfied with what God gives us and not with what we want. Enjoy what God gives you and take advantage of it. If not, you'll be sorry.

This Cuban rhythm has conquered the heart of many Latin artists and is being danced by all kinds of people around the world. Salsa has conquered my heart from the day I first listened to it, and I feel the love for the music every time I dance it. The rhythms of salsa describe feelings and emotions that move my heart, and with the swing it moves my life. Salsa is music and enjoyment; it's the rhythms and the flavor of life.



Ronan, 18, is a Business major at NECC. He enjoys dancing and skating. Before taking Joanna Fortna's Basic Writing class in the spring of 2004, Ronan felt insecure about his writing. Now he feels much more capable of progressing to Composition I.

"I'll Go with You"
by Lea Ann Rapazzo

Growing up with diverse genres of music has made me appreciate their differences. When I met my Italian husband, Paul, he introduced me to the most romantic music, Italian opera. Not being able to understand the lyrics made me more focused on the instruments and vocals. Andrea Bocelli has a way with his voice that will pull me in and take me to another place. When I listen to the music I can feel the passion and emotions by the different tones of his voice. I couldn't understand the lyrics but I could feel them. Italian opera has opened a new realm of music for me.

The first time I heard Italian opera it was Andrea Bocelli's Romanza CD. Paul and I were not married yet and were looking for a wedding song. Paul brought the CD home, and played it for me. He tried to translate the lyrics to me, but didn't know the exact words, so we looked at the English translation of the lyrics that came with the CD. Every song on the CD is written like poetry.

The first song on the CD was called "Con Te Partiro." In English it means, "I'll go with you." The lyrics in this song are romantic. A couple of lines that stood out at me are, "I'll go with you to countries I never saw and shared with you, now, yes, I shall experience them. I'll go with you on ships across the sea which, I know, no, no, exists no longer; with you I shall experience them again." This part of the lyrics is special for Paul and I because we want to share with each other the places we have been. Another part of this song he speaks of his love for this person and how she makes him feel, "When you are far away I dream on the horizon and words fail, and, yes, I know that you are with me; you, my moon, are here with me, my sun, you are here with me." This part is also special because there will be times when we cannot be together physically, and we will have this song that will connect us spiritually. After reading the lyrics Paul and I knew this would be our wedding song.

The first time I heard this song it wasn't the words that moved me; it was his voice and the instruments. His voice is soft but very powerful and passionate. The piano gives this song a musical tone. I love to listen to his music when I'm cleaning my house. The music gives me an "at ease" feel. It keeps me from being overwhelmed by everyday chores. It is balanced and smooth listening music.

Andrea Bocelli's music makes me feel like I'm in Italy. It brings out my romantic side. My senses come alive when I listen to Andrea Bocelli's Romanza CD. As I play the CD I can almost smell the sauces cooking, the garlic, olive oil and onions. It makes me want to cook a flavorsome pasta dinner. I can visualize myself in a medieval hotel in Umbria sitting outside on a patio staring at the vineyards, sipping a glass of wine I helped make. I see myself enjoying a candlelight dinner in a small restaurant off a side street

somewhere in Venice and a gondola ride after. I can also imagine shopping in Milan, or sitting outside a café in Rome sipping a latte before I head off to see the museums and churches. His music almost leaves me breathless.

The year before we got married I bought tickets to see Bocelli in concert for Paul for Christmas. Bocelli in concert is better than listening to the CD. Bocelli had a full orchestra with him and an additional singer for some of his songs. Paul and I weren't in the best seats, but when Bocelli would sing it felt like we were in the front row. It is very hard for me to put in words how his music sounds. He had a lot of piano playing in his music along with wind instruments and his voice is a tenor. When Bocelli sings his voice is so powerful, it goes right through me. It was a wonderful emotional experience seeing him in concert.

I love to listen to his music because to me it is romantic and you can feel the passion Andrea Bocelli puts in each song. It's moving to feel something I can only hear. To share this music with my husband on the most important day of our lives made this music even more special for me. Andrea Bocelli will always be a musician that Paul and I will treasure and share with our family forever.

Lea Ann, 26, lives in Methuen with her husband and 3-year-old son. She is studying radiology at NECC. During Joanna Fortna's Basic Writing class, Lea Ann's feelings about writing changed from "overwhelming" to "excited."

Clean in Fifteen Minutes
by Heather Mottram

You have just received a call from your friend. You have not seen her in quite some time. She just told you that she is in the neighborhood and is going to stop by. That is only the half of it! She will be there in about fifteen to twenty minutes and your house looks like a tornado came by and sucked everything up but the dirt. What do you do? I will tell you exactly what it is you need to do so your friend you haven't seen in so long does not think that you are a walking, talking, dirty person. It's time to clean like you have never cleaned before.

First this is what you will need. Grab a roll of paper towels and some all purpose cleaner. Use whatever product you use to clean your home with. It will come in handy for any grease or sticky spills you may have. If you happen to be out of surface cleaner, just wet your napkin as you go. Then grab two regular plastic bags such as the ones you bring your food home in from the market. The bags are great for disposing your paper towels you will use to clean up with and for any trash that may be lying around your house such as soda cans, wrappers, and leftover food. You can just dump it all in as you go and you will not have to go and collect the items you used to clean up the dirt later. You will need at least one candle or some kind of deodorizer spray. It will be nice for the house to have a clean, fresh, scent for when your company shows up. If you do not happen to have either, don't panic! It is not a necessity in this case. However, you only have one minute to collect all of these products that you will need to clean your home with.

Now that you have what you will need, let's focus on one room at a time. But you must not focus on a particular room for too long. Let's start with the kitchen. You should have all your cleaning supplies in your hands and ready for use. You must run as fast as you can around your kitchen and scrub every table including countertops as quick as possible. Spend no more than one minute cleaning your table and countertops. Now set all the items such as your salt and pepper shakers and sugar bowl back on the table, nice and neat. Don't forget to give the stove a quick wiping as well. Remember, your house is "always" clean.

Next, now that all your countertops are clean go around and grab any trash that is lying around your kitchen. This should take you no longer than one minute to do. Put all the trash in the plastic bag you are carrying with you. If there are any spots on the floor spray them and wipe them up with the napkins you have. Spend no longer than one minute cleaning the floor. Now that the kitchen floor is out of the way, let's focus on the kitchen sink. I hope you have a glass clean in case your guest would like a drink. If not wash that cup now! Now you need to do something about the few dishes you have in the sink. You can only spend two minutes on this project. If you have a dishwasher put them in there quickly. Deal with the repercussions later if it is not properly set up. Now you must rinse the sink out, use some kind of cleaning product that has a strong fresh scent to it like Ajax with bleach. Great! Now that the kitchen is all set, let's head into the next important room.

That room would be the living room. Do not focus on this room too much; you only have nine minutes remaining. Are you ready? Good. Spray a couple of the napkins you have and wipe the table up good. You will only need two minutes to clean the table. Don't forget to put your pictures, knickknacks, and magazines back on the table as if they

never needed to be moved. Now, you should wipe the television up real quick with a dry or wet napkin whatever you may prefer. You may take one minute to do this. Now grab that vacuum and vacuum as fast as you ever did in your life. Spend no longer than two minutes cleaning the rug. You must hurry with this project; you have only four minutes remaining before your friend shows up. This is no time to stress out. Everything will go according to plan, if you just stick with the tasks at hand. If your vacuum is not working properly or is broken, just pick up what lint you can with your hands and throw it in the plastic bag you have. If there are toys that are in the way, kick them to the side until you are finished cleaning the rug. Now that the rug is out of the way, grab anything that belongs to the kids and run for their room. Throw the toys under one of their beds. Now just go back into the living room and fluff up that couch and throw any garbage lying around in the bag you have. It will only take you one minute to fluff the couch and pick up the trash. Now for round three go straight to that bathroom.

One of the more important rooms in the house that should always be sanitized is the bathroom. You have three minutes to clean the bathroom. Scrub the toilet up real good. Now wipe the handles on the sink. Spray the all purpose cleaner you have all around the inside of the sink and wipe it up quick. Let the cold water ran for a few seconds to rinse it out. Give a quick scrub to the mirror. Now you have used up fifteen minutes cleaning your home and she is still not here yet.

Now you can do what you can to yourself in the meantime. Fix up your makeup and hair until you hear that doorbell ring. To make this a quick and easy process but still look good, you can possibly put your hair up in a bun. As for your makeup, put a little mascara and eyeliner on to have that fresh awake look.

I guarantee you if you follow these few simple steps your house will be in ship shape for when your friend arrives. These tiny steps are guaranteed to be a success, if you do not focus on one particular thing or room for too long. Good luck! Enjoy your company in your fresh, clean house.

Heather is 22 and lives in Salem, NH. She was a student in Mary O'Neil's Basic Writing class during the Fall 2003 semester. Although she used to be afraid to write, now Heather says, "I have a great deal of confidence in each of my writings."

Waiting a Table
by Andrea Puisys

Are you a shy person that is uncomfortable with waiting tables? Well worry no more. I've been waiting tables for ten years. Once you realize that waiting tables is pretty simple you will start to have fun with it. One major thing to remember is always greet with a smile. People love to see smiling faces. If you have a great attitude most likely the guest will be happy. So, start to relax and I will walk you through this. I promise if you follow these steps each and every time you'll never go wrong. Remember to have fun! So, tie on an apron and let's go!

Are you ready? Do you have a smile on? Remember to relax and be calm. Your first guest awaits. In a timely fashion greet your table and welcome them to the restaurant. Explain to them that your name is so and so and that you're there to attend to their needs. Ask them how they're doing, and maybe tell a joke. Everyone usually can appreciate a good joke, but maybe you're one that can't tell a joke. Don't worry! Talk about the weather or a worldly event. The guests will enjoy a brief conversation. Set the mood so that everyone is comfortable. After having a conversation for a few minutes you'll know if the guests are laid back or uptight. If they're uptight just run! Just kidding! Be calm. Don't panic. The guests are probably just tired and hungry. With a warm friendly waitress and a wonderful hot meal the guest tends to perk up. Now you should know what to expect.

After getting to know your guests, you should now offer the guests something to drink. Always up sell. Suggest a top shelf margarita. Up selling is important, and if you suggest it most likely they will want to try it. It helps the guests with making a decision. At this time you'll offer them an appetizer. Recommend the potato skins. "They're to die for. One bite and you're going to be hooked!" Once you have taken the drink and appetizer order, suggest to them the ribs. "By the way, we have the best ribs in town." Get them thinking about their main course. Then ask the table if they need more time to look over the menu. In most cases they're never ready to order on the first visit to the table. Tell the table that you're going to ring in their drinks and that you'll come right back.

Within a few minutes you'll arrive back at the table. It might be a good time to pay a compliment to a member of the table. You know, get them all juiced up! Everyone enjoys a thoughtful waitress. Present their drinks to them. Ask the guests if they're ready to order a main course. The table is now ready to order. Remember to up sell. "Would you care for a dinner salad with your steak tips? We offer a Caesar and a garden salad." Don't forget to mention that they could have their steak smothered with sauteed onions and bell peppers. By offering these items to the guests it lets them know that you're suggesting everything possible to them. It makes the guests feel good. You're making an effort to make sure they have everything they need. Once again remind the table of your name and tell the table that you're going to ring in their entrees.

By this time it is a good opportunity to check back with the table. If the table ordered an appetizer it should have went out by now. It normally takes ten to twelve minutes to prepare an appetizer, and then present it to the table. Ask the table if they're enjoying their experience. "How are your drinks? Is your appetizer what you expected it to be?" Try suggesting another drink, something more fruity. Also try to start a brief conversation with the guest. I can remember a guest of mine that wouldn't stop talking to me.

The guest said, "This restaurant is busy at all times."

"Yes I know. I make great money because I can turn my tables quickly."

"So how long have you worked here?"

"I've worked here for ten years."

"No wonder why! You're a great waitress!" The guest went on and on. Sometimes you'll be busy and have to know when to end the conversation. Doing this politely could be a difficult task. Try saying, "It was wonderful chatting with you, but I've got to get back to work. I'm pretty busy." In most cases that works. So try to keep your visits to the table short, but sweet. As time goes on you'll be able to pick out the talkers at the table. Just be cautious of getting into a deep conversation.

The next visit to the table will be with their food. Make sure to clear the table of any excess cups or plates, and leave them plenty of room for their main course. Before leaving the table, make the guests check all their food, checking to see if the food is cooked to their satisfaction. Let the table know that you'll be around if they need something. You're more than half way there now. Smooth sailing so far! You can take a deep breath! The table is happy. If you can get this far you're doing great.

Once again you're back at the table. Everyone is done eating. Smile and maybe tell a joke. Try to make the table laugh while you're clearing their dishes. If your joke fails, just start laughing anyway. I can assure you that the table will end up laughing too. Laughter is contagious. Keep the guests amused. They'll love you. Offer coffee and desert.

"We have some creamy, smooth, and mouth watering cheese cake. Or would you just like a cup of coffee?"

Once in a while you'll get a response like, "I'm so full you're going to have to roll me out of here."

The guest will then say, "Everything was great. You're a fun and friendly waitress. We'll take our check. Thank you." You then thank them for visiting and let them know that it was a pleasure to wait on them. Make sure to invite them back. Smile and hand the table the bill. Once again thank the guest again.

This table was a pleasure to wait on. But not every situation will be a pleasant one. For instance, I had a table yell at me because their food was cold. Be calm. It's ok. First, I suggest that you never yell back at the guest. Yelling is the worst thing you could do. Bite your tongue. Be mature. Simply walk away and get a manager. By getting the manager it will release a substantial amount of pressure on you. The manager cools them down by offering to take the food off their bill. Free food works each and every time. Go figure! Keep in mind that every one of us has a bad day once in awhile. Just remember to be polite.

See it wasn't all that hard, nothing to get all upset about. Follow these steps and you'll be successful. Waiting on tables is an adventure. Have fun with your tables. Go out

of your way to get the guest to laugh and have a great time. One of the reasons that people go out to eat is so that they can have a few laughs and have an evening away. When everything goes smoothly it's a pleasure to wait on tables and meet new people. I've learned that waiting tables isn't just about serving food. You're also there to entertain. The many years that I've waited tables I've come to a realization that I enjoy to make people happy. Sometimes it may be challenging. But I've always enjoyed a great challenge.

Andrea lives in Bradford, MA, and loves the outdoors. She is married and has two children, Nicholas and Alexandra. Andrea was a student in Mary O'Neil's Basic Writing class in the fall of 2003, and she says, "I really enjoy writing now. I never thought I would be able to write."

Lead the Way
by Shaun Grover

Values are usually instilled at a young age by our parents or close friends. Values are guidelines to how people live their lives. Up until about three years ago I would've had a difficult time choosing just one value that I live to write about. After my service in the military, leadership is a responsibility I value the most because it is such a strong and valuable characteristic.

When I was a brand new Ranger fresh out of training I was assigned my first team leader. My team leader's name was Sgt. Brandon Young. A team leader is responsible for training a small group of soldiers leading them through every task that is presented to the team. The team leader is responsible for every man in his team and their success or failure. Sgt. Young was big on leadership and discipline. He had a saying that stuck with me which is, "When in charge, be in charge." Sgt. Young instilled a strong sense of leadership in me while I trained under him. After nine months of training under Sgt. Young, I was sent to Ranger school, which is the Army's premiere combat leadership school. I took that, "When in charge be in charge" mentality and graduated on time.

When I graduated Ranger school and went back to my unit, I was asked to take over Sgt. Young's fire team. I was so excited and so nervous at the same time. I had three young men my age and older to lead. I was ultimately responsible for the well being of my team. I was focused on being as good a leader as I knew I could be so I could gain the trust and loyalty of my men. In 2001 I got the opportunity to lead my team of Rangers into real life combat situations and brought every one of them back home safe, which I think is due to the way I trained and led my team. My men looked up to me in stressful situations knowing that I would make all the right decisions because of our history and our trust between one another, which spawned from stellar leadership which formed a working relationship.

Leadership is such an important value to me simply because of what the word means, to lead others. I believe to lead others, your followers or subordinates have to trust and respect you. I remember a particular incident when we were in Jordan conducting a 40 mile overland movement with a full combat load of equipment which weighed at least 90 pounds. I divided up the weight evenly so no one would get the short end of the stick, but evenly divided the load was still hell on my shoulders and back. By about the 20th mile my men were dragging a bit. I did my best to coach and motivate them to not give up but the weight and the heat was just too much for them. I stopped the patrol and took a majority of both of their equipment to try and lighten their load which helped them out a lot but slowed me down a step or two. Even though I was in pain I continued on with the movement to lead by example. I was always told since when I was a young Ranger private, if I take care of my men, my men will take care of me. When my men saw me leading by example they realized that I was the real deal and that I needed them just as much as they needed me.

I also think that in order to be a good leader you must be able to follow as well, in the sense that you need to understand by first hand experience what it feels like to take orders and to do things that you don't particularly want to do. When I trained under Sgt. Young, he made me do a lot of things that I didn't want to do and things I didn't agree with. Some of them were just to give me a hard time, but most of what he told me to do

was for my personal development. I realized he was in charge so I did what the boss said because I trusted his experience, which is why I think you need to be a good follower in order to be a good leader.

Leadership is a strong characteristic that all employers in the business world are looking for in future employees because leadership is what gets the job done. Someone taking the initiative to lead a group in a particular project is something all employers want in their business. The ability to step up and be a leader when need be separates me from my peers. Leadership is definitely a strong characteristic in high demand in every aspect of life, which is why leadership is such an important value to me.

Shaun, 22, is a Liberal Arts major who is interested in sports and fitness. After finishing Joanna Fortna's Basic Writing course, Shaun says about writing: "It's a lot less of a hassle. The words come to me more fluently."

An Important Value
by Monika Szejda-Mudrewicz

There are all types of common values that are important to many people, and all of us have at least one value that became a part of our everyday life. Whether it would be cheerfulness, appearance, politeness, happiness or just faith, we use these values, and practice them every day. Respect and tolerance for elders is a value that I practice in my everyday life. It is important to me because when I was growing up I spent a lot of time around my grandparents. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be the same person, and if it wasn't for my grandfather who fought in World War II the world around me would not be the way it is today. My grandfather's war stories made me thankful to live in the world I live in now, and respectful to the people that are responsible for it.

I believed in the importance of this value since I was a little girl. I grew up in a house where learning how to respect others was one of the most important things. I remember a day when my mom got into an argument with her father. They had different opinions about some issue. During this argument I saw that my mom wanted to do something opposite to what her father wanted her to do, but regardless of what she was thinking she listened to what he had to say, and said thank you at the end. Respect towards the elders is such an important thing, and my mom is the one that instilled this in me. She accomplished it by repeatedly showing me how to behave around the elderly, and how to show them respect in different situations.

Last month I was shopping at WalMart, where I saw all the busy people running around with their shopping lists, trying to get out of there as soon as possible. I noticed a man getting very impatient when an elderly gentleman was in front of him in an aisle trying to reach something from a higher shelf. Looking at this situation for a couple of seconds I decided to help this gentleman pull down an item off the shelf. "That was very nice of you," the impatient man said in a sarcastic voice.

"You have to respect the fact that old people need our help sometimes, even if you don't know them," I replied. I noticed a clash of values; it did not matter for that man whether the gentleman in front of him was 30 or 85, he just wanted him out of his way.

These days there are many elderly folks on the road, especially in my city where public transportation is terrible and people just can't rely on it. People get very impatient when they have an elderly person driving in front of them, and I see that every time I drive with my friends. I try to respect the fact that these people also have places to go. Maybe they are going to see their baby grandchild, or going to a doctor's appointment. Whatever it could be I try to share my point of view with my friends. I tell them about my grandfather whom they all love, and I ask them: "Would you tell my grandpa to get the hell off the road?"

That makes my friends pause for a moment, and one of them said once, "Of course not. Your grandpa is cool and funny, but you're right. I would not be able to treat him that way." Then they realize that one day they will also get old, and they will not want to be disrespected by some teenagers.

Respect and tolerance for the elderly is a value that is very important to me, and I take time to share this with others. Future generations should also be taught that elderly people deserve respect, because not even knowing about it, our grandparents play a major role in our lives. When someone elderly gives you advice, sometimes it seems like

they're preaching. Sometimes it may upset you that someone is trying to tell you what to do, but they simply have a bigger luggage of experience and just want to pass it on because they've been young once before. Whatever it may be, all of us have values which represent us. My grandfather always told me stories about the war, and how he sacrificed long years of his life to make sure that people like me have a better world to live in. Respect, tolerance and patience is the least I can do to show that I appreciate what elderly people have done to make this a better place for me. I will make sure to pass this on to my kids.

Monika is 25 years old; she enjoys drawing and reading books. After finishing Joanna Fortna's Spring 2004 Basic Writing class, Monika says, "I still can't believe that I wrote so many papers, but I'm proud of myself."

My Progress in Writing
by Sandra Fay

In September, I was very fearful of my abilities as a writer. Writing has never been my strong suit. Punctuation and grammar were not the part of writing that I feared. I have always had a fairly good understanding of the do's and don'ts of language. It was the actual thinking and telling of a story that scared me. Taking this course has taught me some basic steps to get through the mechanics of writing a paper. Having almost completed this course I have learned that I can write a paper. I have learned that for a successful paper I need to do prewriting, a thesis statement and use descriptive words.

Composing a list before I write an actual paper has really helped me in overcoming my fears of writing. Once I have an idea for a paper this step is very critical for me as a writer. I usually jot down a list of everything important that I want to get across to my reader. Listing helps me to come up with ideas to expand and explore through my paper. I read over my list several times scrawling out more ideas and then scratching out the ones that I decide really won't work. Prewriting is a great tool that I have learned to use for every writing endeavor.

I was unfamiliar with thesis statements before taking this class. I had always heard the term, but was never quite sure of their actual meaning. Now it makes perfect sense to me. Having a thesis statement in my first paragraph helps me to stay focused on my subject instead of wandering all over the place. It provides me with a subject for each paragraph.

I think if I had learned this technique of writing before coming back to school, I might have been able to take English Composition I from the beginning. Thesis statements are a useful tool in keeping your material straightforward and on track. It provides the actual material for your paper. Thinking of a thesis statement is probably the hardest step of writing for me. Once I have decided on a thesis statement, I can usually finish my paper in a timely fashion.

After I have done my prewriting and thesis statement, the rest is kind of easy for me now. I can't believe I am saying this. Once my first draft is done, I go back through my paper looking for places that I can expand on with more detail. I have learned through this course the best descriptions come from your senses. When I write a paper now I am always reading over deciding how the subject felt, smelled or sounded like. I never really thought of this as an important tool, but it has proven to be a great one. Descriptive words make your reader imagine exactly what you are trying to get across. When we had to

write a paper on your favorite place I used this method in describing my pool area. I wrote, "The crystal clear water reflects the brown mosaic tile pattern from the liner." This line tells the reader about the water and the pool. You can imagine the water's reflection.

After taking Basic Writing I feel I have definitely progressed as a writer. I am more confident having learned the basic steps of prewriting, thesis statements and descriptive writing. I am now ready to go on to the next level with less anxiety and more confidence in my ability to create a clear and concise paper.

Sandy, 43, lives in Haverhill, MA and is working toward a career in nursing. Her family includes her husband, Michael, and her daughters, Amy and Emily. After taking Harlan Kroff's Basic Writing class in the fall of 2003, she says, "I have a clear understanding on how to approach writing a paper."

Writing and Me
by Sarah L. Moulton

I was very apprehensive at first about taking a writing class in college. Actually, I was very apprehensive about going back to school all together. Throughout my life writing has always played a very important role. If someone were to ask me what writing meant to me I would say that it was my therapy. During rough periods of my life I would write out my problems. I felt like only then was I able to see the problem from an objective perspective and from that outside point of view it was easier to find the solution. Writing kept me sane some days, but most of all it kept me a healthy person. As far as college writing went, however, I was completely green.

I was incredibly nervous the first day of school. I had no idea what to expect from this writing class or what the class expected of me. Organized writing was not my forte. As far as my personal writing went, I never followed any true guidelines of grammar. It was more or less a matter of my thoughts spilling out onto the pages of my writing books. By the end of the first class we had our first assignment along with a brush up on our prewriting and brainstorming skills. I left that class feeling a little overwhelmed by the amount of work that was required of me; on the other hand, I felt excited about the first assignment. I was writing about something that I loved, the Parker River; I think that made the assignment even more enjoyable.

In my opinion writing that first paper was fun. I took the assignment very seriously and it felt good to write. I found myself putting a lot of effort into my work, although the hardest part of writing the paper was actually allowing someone to read it when I was done. In the past I would never let anyone read my work for fear that they might think that I was inept, a phobia this class would soon break me of. That first paper I had everyone read! Most of my co-workers read it, my parents read it, pretty much anyone that would take the time to read it, read it. I was determined to get an accepted paper and I knew that the only way to assure this was to get as many opinions as possible, no matter how insecure I felt.

As the assignments went on, both my and my instructor's expectations of my work got higher and higher. I was learning the skills to create a well thought out and organized paper. A skill that I will never master I'm sure, but I will always work on. In fact, the process of brainstorming and prewriting has almost become an automatic routine before I begin any new assignment for school or even if I am writing a letter to a colleague.

In addition to prewriting another skill that I have taken from this class is how to utilize the resources around me, an invaluable skill to have in life. Not only do I now feel comfortable going to the writing center at school, I feel comfortable having my friends and family read my papers to help me revise. I can take their constructive criticism to the paper instead of to my heart.

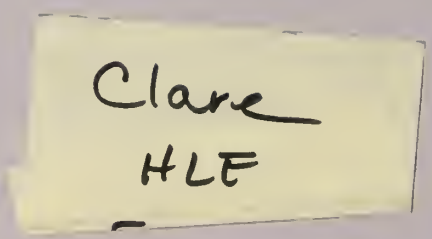
This class has helped me separate my writing strengths from my weaknesses. Now I know what I need to concentrate on during my revisions. For instance, I know that one of my weaknesses is with comma splices, and I am sure that there are a few in this paper. But as I revise I know to look for them. My strengths would have to be the context in which the paper is written; it helps to enjoy writing.

As I reflect on the papers that I have written for this class it is apparent as to where my priorities are in my life. Most frequently my papers were about my work, second was my passion for boating, and finally my love, Jason. Not that this is a bad thing, but on the contrary it makes me feel proud. I know that I have a good life and it is only going to get better.

In short, I feel way more confident about my writing after taking this class. I feel as though I have learned many valuable skills that have enhanced the quality of my writing and my

writing process. Although I am still nervous for the next semester, I feel much more confident writing and utilizing my resources. I would recommend this class to anyone that felt unsure of their writing skills, and I have found this class to be a great asset to my college education.

Sarah is 23 and a Business Management major at NECC. She is interested in boating, and she currently runs a ship's store. Sarah took Basic Writing with Mary O'Neil during the Fall 2003 semester.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